



## **The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.**

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Containing The First of his Letters

**Pope, Alexander**

**London, 1751**

VIII. An account of the duller fort of Country Gentlemen, and Country Life.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

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minion, and then gave him nothing to subsist upon but wafers and marmalade. In our days the greatest obligation you can lay upon a Wit, is to make a fool of him. For as when madmen are found incurable, wise men give them their way, and please them as well as they can; so when those incorrigible things, Poets, are once irrecoverably be-mus'd, the best way both to quiet them, and secure yourself from the effects of their frenzy, is to feed their vanity; which indeed, for the most part, is all that is fed in a poet.

You may believe me, I could be heartily glad that all you say were as true, applied to me, as it would be to yourself, for several weighty reasons; but for none so much as that I might be to you what you deserve; whereas I can now be no more than is consistent with the small tho' utmost capacity of &c.

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L E T T E R VIII.

Oct. 26, 1705.

I Have now changed the scene from the town to the country; from Will's coffee-house to Windsor-forest. I find no other difference than this, betwixt the common town-wits, and the downright country fools; that the first are  
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perly in the wrong, with a little more flourish and gayety; and the last neither in the right nor the wrong, but confirmed in a stupid settled medium betwixt both. However, methinks, these are most in the right, who quietly and easily resign themselves over to the gentle reign of dulness, which the Wits must do at last, tho' after a great deal of noise, and resistance. Ours are a sort of modest inoffensive people, who neither have sense, nor pretend to any, but enjoy a jovial sort of dulness: They are commonly known in the world by the name of honest, civil gentlemen: They live, much as they ride, at random; a kind of hunting life, pursuing with earnestness and hazard something not worth the catching; never in the way, nor out of it. I can't but prefer solitude to the company of all these; for tho' a man's self may possibly be the worst fellow to converse with in the world, yet one would think the company of a person whom we have the greatest regard to and affection for, could not be very unpleasant. As a man in love with a mistress, desires no conversation but hers, so a man in love with himself (as most men are) may be best pleased with his own. Besides, if the truest and most useful knowledge be the knowledge of ourselves, solitude, conducing most to make us look into ourselves, should be the

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the most instructive state of life. We see nothing more commonly, than men, who for the sake of the circumstantial part and mere outside of life, have been half their days rambling out of their nature, and ought to be sent into solitude to study themselves over again. People are usually spoiled, instead of being taught, at their coming into the world; whereas by being more conversant with Obscurity, without any pains, they would naturally follow what they were meant for. In a word, if a man be a coxcomb, Solitude is his best School; and if he be a fool, it is his best Sanctuary.

These are good reasons for my own stay here, but I wish I could give you any for your coming hither, except that I earnestly invite you. And yet I can't help saying I have suffered a great deal of discontent that you do not come, tho' I so little merit that you should.

I must complain of the shortness of your last. Those who have most wit, like those who have most money, are generally most sparing of either.